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ABSTRACT

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation developed and sponsored the Middle Grades Initiative (MGI), which began in 1989, in five urban school systems: (1) Baltimore (Maryland); (2) Louisville (Kentucky); (3) Milwaukee (Wisconsin); (4) Oakland (California); and (5) San Diego (California). The purpose of MGI was to change the ways schools educate young, disadvantaged adolescents with objectives designed around high content standards, high support, and high expectations. Between leaving grade 5 and entering grade 10, students are expected to complete the middle grades curriculum on time, to exhibit mastery of higher order thinking and comprehension skills, to exhibit improved self-esteem and attitudes, and to understand how curricula can affect education options. This report presents the findings of the Education Resources Group (ERG) on how the MGI has been implemented in the 12 schools targeted in the 5 cities. ERG has found that as teachers raised their expectations for students, they increasingly focused on higher order and critical thinking activities and on the inclusion of all students in high content instruction. Eight tables provide information on student achievement, and five appendixes present information about the study schools, study staff and methodology, and a list of resources in middle-level education. (Contains seven references.) (SLD)

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Expecting The Best From Students In Urban Middle Schools

A Report on The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's Middle Grades Initiative

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1994

Dedicated

To the Memory of

Mary Gibbons-Holl

Eighth-Grade Teacher and Friend

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Introduction

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation developed and sponsored the Middle Grades Initiative, which began in summer, 1989 in five school systems: Baltimore, Louisville, Milwaukee, Oakland, and San Diego. Its purpose was to change fundamentally the ways schools educate young, disadvantaged adolescents.

The Foundation established four goals for student performance. Between leaving grade five and entering grade ten, students would:

(1) complete the middle grades curriculum on time;

(2) exhibit mastery of higher order reasoning, thinking, and comprehension skills;

(3) exhibit improved self-esteem, self-efficacy, and attitudes toward school and schoolwork, as a result of regularly engaging in supportive interactions with adults; and

(4) understand how different curricula can affect their career and/or postsecondary education options, and select programs of study that will enable them to pursue their choices.

To accomplish these goals, 12 schools from the five districts implemented a variety of activities focusing on high expectations, high support, and high content. To improve the quality of implementation, the schools conducted needs assessments, planning, and staff development activities. (See Appendix A for list of participating schools.)

The Foundation engaged Education Resources Group (ERG), a non-profit documentation and evaluation firm, to study program activities and to document changes in students' behavior and academic performance. Between 1989 and 1993, ERG gathered qualitative information about implementation, administered several student surveys and assessments each spring, and collected attendance and performance data. (See Appendix B for Key Documentation Data Points.)

This report presents ERG's findings about how Middle Grades Initiative strategies and activities were implemented in the 12 schools, and describes how school and classroom life changed for students and teachers in response to heightened expectations for students' performance. ERG found that as teachers raised their expectations, *they increasingly focused on higher order and critical thinking activities, and on inclusion of all students in high content instruction.*

This finding may constitute the most significant contribution to the literature on high expectations. It extends the common manifestation of high expectations beyond rewards, incentives, and feedback, to opportunities for enhanced student-teacher interactions, and even requirements for student participation in higher-level coursework.

Defining Expectations

An effective school must have high expectations of all students. There must be a pervasive belief among the staff that all children can and will learn.

— Kim Marshall
Urban elementary school principal[1]

An urban school will be successful only as teachers, administrators, and community leaders have confidence that all students can succeed.

— Carnegie Foundation for the
Advancement of Teaching[2]

In creating its Middle Grades Initiative, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation designed objectives around three "highs": **high content, high support, and high expectations**. Drawing upon the Effective Schools Movement, notably Ron Edmonds' axiom that "all students can learn,"[3] the Initiative rested on the principle that school administrators and teachers must promote and support high academic achievement, building on the academic strengths of all students, particularly the disadvantaged.

When the Middle Grades Initiative began, the 12 participating middle schools in Baltimore, Louisville, Milwaukee, Oakland, and San Diego had low expectations for the performance of poor, minority students; high absenteeism rates; low student achievement test scores; and generally unexceptional instructional programs.

High Expectations

- Schools promote and support high levels of academic achievement by disadvantaged students.
- Administrators and teachers believe that disadvantaged youth can achieve at high levels.
- Teachers identify, praise, and build on students' academic strengths.
- Disadvantaged youth:
  - have access to challenging courses, content, and materials;
  - are consistently encouraged and supported to perform at higher levels than they think possible;
  - have opportunities for academic interaction with high achieving students;
  - are consistently provided with information, encouragement, and support that result in exploration of challenging curricular, extracurricular, and postsecondary education and career opportunities.

All 12 schools implemented activities to foster high expectations for students' academic achievement. Their success depended on the quality and degree of implementation and the extent to which teachers agreed that all children are educable. Kim Marshall (1993) discusses this issue.

> Where do some teachers get such a belief system? It may come from the experience of having been sold short by teachers oneself. It may come from ideological conviction — from having been exposed to some of the great educators . . . who have preached this gospel. It may come from a planned experience . . . that brings about a paradigm shift from the concept of schools as sorting machines . . . And it may come from being part of a schoolwide reform initiative specifically focused on raising expectations . . . (p. 224).

Because the Middle Grades Initiative "specifically focused on raising expectations," Foundation officers expected teachers both to act on this belief and *to develop it over time*. They asked Education Resources Group to document and evaluate the practices and outcomes related to high expectations between July, 1989 and June, 1993 as a major piece of its assessment. (See Appendix C for a list of documentation and evaluation team members.)

In presenting ERG's findings, this monograph highlights interactions between staff and students as manifested through:

1. recognition of students' accomplishments using rewards and incentives;
2. teachers' behavior toward students, particularly in the classroom;

■ The teacher who assumes that her students cannot learn is likely to discover that she has a class of children who are indeed unable to learn; yet another teacher, working with the same class but without the same expectation, may discover that she has a class of interested learners. The same obtains with respect to behavior: the teacher who assumes that her students will be disruptive is likely to have a disruptive class on her hands.

— Charles Silberman
Crisis in the Classroom

■ We lack an acceptable vocabulary for describing the differential expectations held by teachers that enhance students' capacity to learn. To say that teachers must have appropriate or realistic expectations is to use language redolent of racism, sexism, and elitism. But it is *not* reasonable that teachers should expect all students to learn, unless learning is a highly differentiated term. It *is* reasonable that their expectations not be tied to race, sex, or class so as to limit students' growth. It *is* reasonable that there be constant reassessment about structural barriers to learning.

— Joan Lipsitz
Successful Schools for Young Adolescents

3. emphasis on the importance of secondary school work for careers and college; and
4. infusion of challenging courses and content into middle grades classrooms.

Discussion of these topics follows a description of the operational definition used and methods of data collection.

Studying Expectations

Research on teacher expectations became prominent with Rosenthal and Jacobson's experiment in "self-fulfilling prophecies," *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (1968),[4] in which falsified test scores shaped teachers' expectations of students' performance and as a result affected academic achievement. During the past two decades, research has consistently shown that "teachers' expectations can and sometimes do affect teacher-student interaction and student outcomes."[5] As Anne Wheelock noted in *Crossing the Tracks*,[6]

> Teachers, like anyone, are subject to unconscious biases that surface in the unequal distribution of attention to high- and low-performing students. In practice, despite teachers' best intentions, students whom teachers perceive as being most able to achieve often receive teachers' most positive attention, whereas those regarded as "low achievers" are least likely to receive the kind of teacher intervention that aids in learning (p. 92).

Some researchers believe that this differential treatment occurs because teachers do not know how to respond to children who have difficulty learning.[7] Wheelock writes that "school staff must examine both their beliefs about achievement and the ways in which they put those beliefs into practice."[8]

In order to study how teachers in the 12 project schools "put those beliefs into practice," ERG developed a series of data collection activities, including classroom observations, structured team interviews, and student surveys and assessments.

A Classroom Observation Form incorporated four factors which Rosenthal[9] suggested could improve overall student achievement: **climate, input, feedback, and output**.

- **Climate** — Teachers create warm social-emotional relationships with students.
- **Input** — Teachers present more difficult materials to students.
- **Feedback** — Teachers give students frequent feedback about their performance.
- **Output** — Teachers give students more opportunities to respond and ask questions.

The writing of the last 20 years is replete with findings supporting the notion that high expectations by adults have a positive effect on student achievement . . . regardless of economic or ethnic characteristics.

—Forsyth
City Schools: Leading the Way

Using the Classroom Observation Form, ERG documenters recorded activities in close to 300 classes in the 12 schools over three school-years, from 1990-91 through 1992-93. Although three quarters of the observations took place in math, language arts, science, and social studies classes, documenters observed many different teachers and a variety of other subjects.

ERG documenters supplemented classroom observations with formal, structured interviews with teacher teams in each site at three points in time: fall, 1991, spring or fall 1992, and spring, 1993, interviewing between 25 and 50 percent of the teachers in a school each time. Teachers' responses to questions about how they were implementing high expectations revealed personal definitions, understandings, and behaviors.

Each spring ERG administered the *Quality of School Life Scale* (QSL)[10], eliciting students' reactions to teachers' behaviors and practices, their feelings about school, and their perceptions of what happens in school. QSL subscales include "Reactions to Teachers," "Satisfaction with School," and "Commitment to Classwork."

The *School and Career Planning Survey* developed by ERG elicits students' understandings about the effects of middle and high school academic work on their postsecondary options. It incorporates items from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS)[11], which surveyed a national sample of eighth graders in 1988.

ERG also used the *Cornell Critical Thinking Test*,[12] an alternative to content-based standardized reading and math tests, to measure students' problem solving skills through a case situation which requires reading comprehension.

These observations, interviews, surveys, and assessments, enhanced by ongoing documentation of the Middle Grades Initiative, provided ERG with rich, in-depth information about how high expectations were manifested in the 12 schools. While results were not always dramatic, the documentation revealed some illuminating stories about ways that teachers' and students' behaviors did change steadily over time. The following accounts of the Initiative in Muirlands and Parkman Middle Schools illustrate how school transformations occurred.

Three quarters of "effective" urban secondary schools researched by Matt Miles and Karen Seashore Louis included the following high expectations components:

- more structured educational environments;
- increased expectations for students' academic performance;
- consensus on school goals; and
- increased parental involvement.

from *Improving the Urban High School*

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Raising Expectations

Muirlands Middle School

A former Muirlands Junior High School assistant principal, who is Latino but only speaks "a little" Spanish, said that the first day he was at Muirlands he watched the wealthy neighborhood kids being dropped off in fancy cars or arriving on expensive bikes, while the barrio kids came in buses and wore bandannas on their heads. The principal walked him toward the buses, and said, "Can you get rid of those bandannas?"

"I don't do bandannas," the assistant principal said.

Muirlands is comprised of two distinct student groups. Because the school participates in the San Diego Unified School District's Voluntary Ethnic Enrollment Program (VEEP), about one third of its students are bussed from El Barrio in the southeast corner of the city, 45 minutes away. The great majority of its students are from white, professional La Jolla families.

Situated in the northwest corner of San Diego, La Jolla is aptly named: The Jewel. Muirlands Middle School is the jewel of the school district. Students' test scores are high, the school is beautiful, and teachers want to be there.

Both Latino and White children dress in good taste and are courteous to one another. Teachers and administrators address them respectfully by their first names. The most noticeable clustering of students exists among the Latinos, but usually in groups of three or four and usually of the same gender.

School administrators report that students from El Barrio prefer attending Muirlands because of its safer environment and beautiful ocean setting. Adults recognize that the affluent neighborhood youth have a distinct advantage over the bussed children.

It became clear during the first two years of the Middle Grades Initiative that La Jolla students' distinct advantage over El Barrio students pertained to academic as well as home environments. Even as the school transformed from a junior high (grades 7 to 9) to a middle school (grades 6 to 8), implementing interdisciplinary teams and advisory classes, students continued to be grouped by ability. Each grade had gifted and talented (GATE) classes for which mostly White children were academically qualified. Special activities like the model United Nations were available mostly to White students. White students ran the student government, and an annual East Coast trip that cost about $1,000 per student was all-White.

Many of the Latino students were placed in special education classes and were held back in school. Their parents were led to believe that special education was providing specialized instruction that these children needed in order to get ahead, yet they were not informed about other programs in the school or the review procedures to leave special education. Many students were assigned to special education when they had English language difficulties, not learning difficulties. Most of the teachers and aides in the school spoke no Spanish, yet teachers had neither materials nor training to reach out to students with limited English proficiency.

The assumption that Latino students could not excel academically pervaded the school. Latinos were considered the "regular" students as distinct from the White GATE students. Unlike GATE students, regular students were not typically given special projects because

many teachers believed it took too much time to explain and follow up, and it was assumed that regular students did not have resources at home to complete the projects. An oral history project, for example, required students to interview someone for a perspective on an historical event, do library research, and use other sources to write a report. Many teachers believed that, while the GATE students would be able to handle such a project, regular students would not complete it.

One morning in late spring, 1991 two dozen Latino eighth graders were assembled during an advisory period for a conversation with school administrators and counselors. The students were failing their courses, and the adults wanted to know why. Giving examples of other El Barrio students who had "made it" by enrolling in ROTC, the Police Academy, and the Fire Department, the adults appeared to blame the students for their school failure. They also exhibited low expectations for the students' futures by their choice of non-professional career examples.

The assistant principal there, a Latino new to the school, asked the children if they were having problems. They told her they had "no one to assist them in school" when they did not understand assignments, and felt that the teachers were unwilling to explain. They named many obstacles to achievement — prejudice, impatience, yelling, and refusal to listen or give a second chance.

When the session was over, the adults seemed upset about the students' complaints. One remarked that if the students really wanted to learn, they would find a way.

Their parents were finding a way to learn. Funded by the Clark Foundation, The June Burnett Institute's Home/School Partnership was teaching parents how to understand the school system, their rights, and their children's rights. In the spring, 1992, newly empowered parents, upset over the perceived discriminatory treatment of their children in Muirlands Middle School, demanded that the school provide equal opportunities for all students. Mediation between school staff and parents resulted in a formal plan to "close the achievement gap" between Latino and White students.

Heterogenous sixth-grade student teams resulted in higher achievement, more tolerance for different ethnic groups and cultures, and requests for more integrated student teams. Seventh and eighth graders were to be integrated the following school year.

A new approach to student "advisory" periods featured clubs and activities designed to integrate La Jolla and El Barrio students. A revamped Associated Student Body encouraged Latino participation. The Hispanic Leaders Club raised funds for Latino students to go on the East Coast trip. These changes are gradually improving students' self-esteem and motivation.

Students' responses on the *Quality of School Life Scale* administered in the spring, 1993 improved substantially over the prior spring. In "Satisfaction with School," four to six percent more student responses were in the "high" category, compared to the year before. In "Commitment to Classwork," eight to ten percent more responses were in the "high" category, and in "Reactions to Teachers," five to thirteen percent more scored in the "high" category.

These numbers indicate that students were reacting more positively to school after efforts to integrate El Barrio and La Jolla students both academically and socially. The fundamental change in Muirlands was that school staff communicated their growing expectation that Latino students could and would perform better given the opportunity.

Parkman Middle School

In 1989, Parkman Middle School was in trouble. Teacher morale was low, students were "out of control," and the principal was seen as ineffective, unable to move beyond the planning stages of the Middle Grades Initiative. Parents were not visible and there was little contact between the school and community agencies.

Parkman is one of two middle schools in Milwaukee with all-African-American student populations. Due to the district's minority teacher apportionment system, the staff was less than a quarter African-American. With one exception, all leaders of the Initiative were White. These leaders reported that annual student mobility rates exceeded 60 percent a year and nearly 20 percent of students were absent each day. Expectations for student learning and good teaching were dismal.

Discipline was a problem: students frequently cut class; passing time was noisy; lunch was chaos. A typical incident occurred when one student kicked another, and an African-American teacher shook the student against a wall, yelling at her hysterically. Several other staff members including the principal observed, but no one intervened. When the incident ended, the group went to the detention office.

Teachers who had been in the building for 20 years were threatening to leave over the discipline problem. One teacher explained, "Rules of behavior have been developed before, but since they don't work, they are changed continuously. Tardy students are placed on detention for a whole period . . . [and] students who do not want to attend a class get in late on purpose. This is making the system work against the students." Teachers looked to the Initiative for help.

During the first project year, teachers attended a conference on discipline, and then decided to "clamp down" and expect more responsible student behavior. They focused on "consequences," instituting hall sweeps and pass checks. Although this strategy did help to corral more students into classrooms, it was a punitive rather than constructive solution.

Foundation funding allowed one teacher who was a proponent of cooperative learning to provide workshops, model the technique for teachers in their classes, and observe and give feedback to teachers as they tried the method. However, only eight of 50 teachers actively used cooperative learning that year. A parent center was set up, but did not accomplish much. By the end of the year, teacher morale was still low. Outside forces, such as neighborhood violence, gangs, and racial unrest, exacerbated the sense of hopelessness.

The second project year continued to be difficult for Parkman. The school suffered the impact of high staff turnover, an unexpected influx of special education students, and a sense that the district was not supportive.

Observers found that halls and classrooms were mostly bare; the few student works that were displayed at the school entrance turned out to be from a neighboring school. Classes lacked both rigor and substance. Many students seemed to be killing time. In French class, for

example, the teacher was answering questions and talking to a few students. Other students had books out, but it was difficult to determine what they were supposed to be working on. Most students in a band class were already lined up to leave, although the bell was not scheduled to ring for almost ten minutes. Teachers seemed to be worried primarily about "keeping the lid on" and making it through each period.

The awards ceremonies that Parkman had begun the previous year to recognize student achievement continued in June, 1991, but students seemed interested only in the gifts awarded; they showed no pride in accomplishment. Although some students were applauded for two to three years of achievement in both reading and math, in general students showed little enthusiasm, as though they mistrusted the whole scene.

Then, that fall, Parkman got a new, African-American principal. He had been active in the development of the African-American immersion school concept in Milwaukee, and although Parkman was not selected to be that school, his leadership clearly reflected that philosophy.

Parents felt that this assignment was partly the result of their efforts, stimulated by a community organizer hired through the Parent Empowerment Project of the Greater Milwaukee Trust — funded by the Clark Foundation in 1990. The organizer had increased parents' awareness of how ethnic issues affected school activities. For example, because an interpretation of a court ruling limited the number of minority teachers allowed in the school, African-American substitute teachers could not obtain permanent jobs at Parkman. Parents had raised this issue with the school board.

Now, in addition to a new principal, they had a new art teacher who helped her students produce Afrocentric artwork. When the eighth graders finished their project on African shields, their parents were invited to a dedication ceremony for a permanent shield display in the main hallway. For Black History Month, the school had a door-decorating contest; symbols of African culture and information on African-American contributions to the development of history and knowledge were everywhere. Each morning both the American anthem and the Black national anthem were played.

The school's appearance changed in other ways as well: slogans such as "Responsibility and Honesty = Success," "You Can Go to College if You Want to," and "It's a New Day at Parkman" adorned the bulletin boards. Rules of conduct were clarified, consistently repeated, and enforced. Aides and guards had a business-like, but not hostile, attitude. African-American teaching staff took a more visible, affirmative posture in school activities. The Center for Early Adolescence's technical assistant provided staff training in multicultural understanding.

The community around Parkman became supportive of students and emphasized their African-American identity. Parents of prospective students visited the school because Parkman's new reputation was spreading. Teachers agreed that school climate had dramatically improved — in fact, had turned around. Teachers commented:

> "Last year the kids had taken over the building, and now it is pleasant and orderly."
>
> "Look in the hallways and (you will) see kids who are smiling and who like to be here."

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"If I was out sick last year, my classroom would be destroyed. This year, on my return from a sick day the substitute said that it had been a nice experience!"

Parents wanted their children to stay in Parkman even if they moved; more of them were taking advantage of a district policy allowing students to have bus transportation to their former schools after a family move.

Since the climate had improved, the principal said, "now it's time for assessment and instruction to take center stage." Students who did not complete homework were required to attend morning tutorials, and some teachers said they had begun to require more writing and the reading of more difficult literature.

Teachers believed that they had moved toward higher content in instruction, and that staff development they received over the years through the project had improved their professional skills. Above all, they believed that their expectations of students were higher, and that student behavior and school work had improved accordingly. As one teacher said, "Sixth graders are required to take algebra; new students are shocked at what we expect them to do here."

How did these changes occur? Parkman's new focus on Afrocentrism and Muirlands' commitment to close the achievement gap led to activities which resulted in changed expectations for African-American and Latino students. Other schools in the project used different strategies to raise expectations for diverse racial and ethnic student groups.

These schools shared a growing recognition that exhibiting high expectations entails a great deal more than rewarding adherence to superficial standards such as perfect attendance, important as attendance may be. Requiring all middle graders to take algebra, for example, is a clear signal that adults in schools believe every child is capable of learning difficult subject matter.

ERG found that the schools demonstrated higher expectations by rewarding students for improved performance and providing them with opportunities for more rigorous academic learning. Findings from the Middle Grades Initiative form a continuum of efforts:

- student recognition through rewards and incentives;
- a focus on teacher-student interactions in the classroom and the effects of teacher behaviors on student performance;
- schools' attempts to raise students' expectations for colleges and careers; and
- introduction of high content and critical thinking curricula for all students.

The following chapters recount the schools' journeys along the expectations continuum.

Student Recognition: The Basics

Western Middle School's library is overflowing with parents, students, and teachers. They are listening to a former high school principal give a personal account of being the youngest of 12 children from an Eastern Kentucky coal mining family that neither valued nor could afford a college education for him. He nevertheless became his family's only college graduate. Next a minister, the wife of Western's principal, emphasizes the parents' role in school and stresses that morals and values go hand in hand with academic attainment.

Two students from each of the school's seven interdisciplinary teams who have been nominated for recognition by their teachers stand as the teachers explain their exemplary accomplishments. They are rewarded for work on class projects, academic growth, good attendance, citizenship, conduct, and winning state-wide contests.

Two teachers are honored as "Teachers of the Month." The sixth-grade social studies teacher makes history come alive for students through her creativity and use of hands-on instructional approaches. The other teacher is recognized for her involvement in multiple school and community projects.

The most moving part of the ceremony comes when two students read their letters of nomination to honor their parents. A daughter reads: "My mother and I have been through my life and her life together . . . Like when she was getting married to someone who did not care for anyone but his self. And when she got married to a man on drugs which happens to be my father. I think my mother should get this award because she is raising two children on her own." The son who nominated his father states: "He cares about me very much. He helps me with my homework . . . When I lived with my mother, my stepfather beat me. They took me from my dad for years. My dad was determined to get me back."

This is Western Middle School's monthly Falcon Awards Ceremony — a truly special event — which began in the second year of the Middle Grades Initiative. Although students are being recognized for their academic achievements, Western values other kinds of contributions as well — for example, ingenuity and creativity, overcoming hardships, and being helpful to others.

Likewise, recognition of teachers and parents for their stimulating, challenging, and supportive contributions is taken seriously by the students. Western's principal has said, "It's a cyclical kind of thing highlighting success and using winners to motivate others." Teachers report that recognition has in fact changed the attitudes of students and teachers.

Public recognition provides a mechanism for schools and teachers to ensure that students know what is expected of them, behaviorally, socially, and academically. Recognition motivates students, provides academic incentives, increases interest in school and attitudes toward schooling, and raises self-esteem.

A strong student recognition program is a proven, powerfully proactive element of any transformation process.

— Barry Raebeck,
former middle school principal[13]

In 1991-92, middle school principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders around the country assigned priorities to important tasks of American schools.[14] "Development of positive self-concept and good human relations" — a benefit of awards and recognition activities — ranked second. The Middle Grades Assessment Program (MGAP),[15] a needs-assessment instrument used by several of the 12 project schools, also relates these characteristics to the parameters of adolescent development it measures.

These schools first attempted to nurture high expectations by providing student recognitions and incentives, ranging from the more traditional end-of-year awards ceremonies to broadly-targeted events like Western's Falcon Day. Their purpose was to make students feel

good about school and themselves, so they would learn better. Schools held assemblies, sent students' letters of commendation home to parents, displayed achievers' and "good citizens" pictures on bulletin boards, and gave coupons for prizes or discounts at local stores. Incentives could be arranged through such devices as pizza parties for best attendance within a team, or buttons, T-shirts, and field trips for making honor roll, passing all classes, and improving the most over a grading cycle.

The project schools' student recognition activities are displayed in Table 1. Most provide recognition for accomplishments in academic performance, attendance, and behavior. Some recognize accomplishments in citizenship, service learning, leadership, and other areas.

Even the most sophisticated of these activities focused on more traditional academic achievement, e.g., making the honor roll and such variations as: the "junior" and "merit" honor rolls at West Baltimore Middle School; the "A" and "B" honor rolls at Southern; and the awards for bilingual students' achievement at Kosciuszko. Awards given to students in one non-project middle school described in *Crossing the Tracks*[16] offer even more variations.

> Ninety seventh and eighth graders are arranging their chairs in a semi-circle in preparation for the weekly "Community Meeting" with their teachers . . . 'Awards' is the [second] agenda item. This is the time when teachers acknowledge a student from each class who merits special recognition. In turn, the teachers come to the front of the room and call a boy or girl forward for a photograph and citation. Acknowledgement is given for a variety of reasons: 1) most remarkable turnaround since the last quiz; 2) highest mark on an exam; 3) helping to create a challenging environment within the classroom; and 4) working hard and asking questions when the information is not clear (pp. 103-104).

Table 1
Student Recognition Activities in Middle Grades Initiative Schools Over Time

	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Calverton	Recognition: Academic Attendance Student of Month Incentives: Academic Behavior (quarterly)	Recognition: Academic Attendance Behavior Homework Incentives: Academic Attendance Behavior (quarterly)	Recognition: Academic Attendance Behavior (quarterly)	Recognition: Academic Attendance Behavior (quarterly)
West Baltimore	Recognition: Academic Attendance Citizenship Service Learning (monthly/quarterly)	Recognition: Academic Attendance Citizenship (monthly/quarterly)	Recognition: Academic Citizenship Work Habits Volunteerism (monthly/quarterly)	Recognition: Academic Attendance Citizenship (monthly/quarterly)
Iroquois	Recognition: Academic Attendance Behavior Citizenship Incentives: Stay-in-School	Recognition: Academic Attendance Citizenship	Recognition: Academic Behavior Incentives: Attendance	Recognition: Academic Behavior Service Learning Incentives: Attendance Stay-in-School
Southern	Recognition: Academic Incentives: Achievement Behavior	Recognition: Academic Doing Good Skills Incentives: Achievement Behavior Attendance	Recognition: Academic Doing Good Student of Month Incentives: Attendance	Recognition: Academic Attendance Behavior Outstanding Thinkers Service Learning Incentives: Attendance Behavior
Western	Recognition: Academic Attendance Citizenship Improvement	Recognition: Academic Attendance Behavior (monthly)	Recognition: Academic Attendance Behavior (monthly)	Recognition: Academic Attendance Behavior Service Learning

Table 1 (continued)
Student Recognition Activities in Middle Grades Initiative Schools Over Time

	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Kosciuszko	Recognition: Academic Attendance Effort Bilingual Achievement	Recognition: Attendance Doing Good Improvement Bilingual Achievement		Recognition: Peer Mediators
Parkman	Recognition: Academic Incentives: Attendance	Recognition: Academic Attendance Behavior	Recognition: Attendance Computer Achievement Improvement	Recognition: Computer Achievement Behavior
Frick		Recognition: Performance	Recognition: Academic Performance	
King Estates		Recognition: Academic Attendance Citizenship	Recognition: Academic Citizenship	Recognition: Academic
Roosevelt	Recognition: Most Improved Perfect Attendance	Recognition: Attendance Most Improved Most Talented	Recognition: Attendance Most Improved Citizenship	 Incentives: Academic Attendance
Mann	Recognition: Academic Citizenship Incentives: Academic Behavior (six weeks)	Recognition: Academic Citizenship (six weeks)	Recognition: Academic Citizenship Behavior Incentives: Behavior (six weeks)	Recognition: Academic Behavior (six weeks)
Muirlands	Recognition: Academic Attendance Behavior Leadership Athletic Student of Month	Recognition: Academic Attendance Behavior Leadership Athletic Student of Month	Recognition: Academic Attendance Behavior Student of Month	Recognition: Academic Attendance Behavior Student of Month

The last two criteria are particularly intriguing because they go beyond achieving good grades or scoring high on tests. They emphasize effort and reflect an expectation that students will think critically, participate actively in class, ask challenging questions, and work on problem solving. These criteria exemplify higher order thinking, a key goal of the Middle Grades Initiative. These types of recognized accomplishments were the next step for many of the project schools.

Moving away from recognition for *ability-focused* achievement to recognition for more *task-focused* achievement may increase motivation and learning for children who do not make the honor roll. As Maehr, et al point out:[17]

> In a system emphasizing ability-focused goals, children are concerned with comparative judgments about their abilities. When the system emphasizes task-focused goals, children are concerned with gaining understanding and skills, or meeting a challenge (p.74).

Schools that recognize students for progress, effort, and improvement communicate the importance of working toward a "personal best."

Children who pursue task-focused goals try harder, take on more challenging tasks, persist longer, handle failure better, are more creative, and in general exhibit more adaptive patterns of learning than children who pursue ability-focused [competitive] goals.

—*Midgley and Wood,*
"Beyond Site-Based Management"

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A task-focus also broadens the definition of learning beyond memorizing and preparing to take tests. The first and third agenda items for the weekly Community Meeting of seventh and eighth graders with their teachers were to identify issues to discuss with the Student Council and to decide whether to continue the Black Student Union. The children were not only participating in responsible decision-making roles; they were also being given the opportunity to interact meaningfully with adults and to receive feedback about their ideas and concerns.

Teachers' roles at this meeting were critically important: they expected students to participate, they acknowledged each child for his or her contribution, and they reinforced students' confidence in their own ideas. Teachers modeled high expectations, reinforced students' engagement in school life, and nurtured learning. They represented a standard toward which urban middle schools can strive.

Changing Teacher Behavior

In the summer, 1990, the Southern Stars teaching team held a picnic for families of incoming sixth-graders. Fifty families attended — the largest number of parents ever to attend a parents' event. They followed up with a hot dog supper and orientation a week before school started. Two team members who live in the area visited most of their students' homes. Others held telephone conferences every evening with parents.

On the second day of school, an assembly was held to explain academic and behavioral expectations to students. Each of the school's eight "families" (teams of teachers and students) distributed two- to four-page descriptions of goals, objectives, and expectations for the school year.

The school's monthly ***Sabers News*** *(Sabers Are Bright Educated Responsible Students) included coverage of teams' activities and students' accomplishments. The pervasive feeling at Southern Middle School was that principal Skip Clemons, other administrators, and teachers really care about students.*

Southern's teachers seem always to be thinking up new ways to let students know their efforts are noticed. They designed a referral form — Striving Means Success — to recognize student accomplishments in a variety of categories. Teachers snap and display photographs of students "caught doing something good."

Southern teachers won a Collegial Planning Grant in late 1992 to establish a "Think Tank" to strategize. At the monthly meetings, they devise ways to motivate students in specific areas such as academics, promptness, and attendance.

A School-Community Action Team, jointly run by a Southern counselor and the school's Youth Services Center coordinator, brings together parents, teachers, and administrators to discuss school and community-related problems and successes. The interactions help change both staff and parent attitudes, particularly when they share the same concerns, for example, about how the school's image in the community affects children's self-esteem.

Teachers encourage students' constructive interactions with adults by holding luncheons to honor students who have positive attitudes toward school or have improved based on specific goals. They run after-school support groups to enhance students' self-esteem and increase student-teacher rapport.

Two-thirds of the faculty have been trained in the Socratic Seminar, an instructional technique which engages students in discourse, questioning, and oral problem-solving. Teachers who use it say their students are making positive connections, participating in class more, and even staying after school to continue discussions. The students have become more comfortable interacting with adults, asking questions and discussing issues with guest speakers and community representatives.

The upbeat school climate has not gone unnoticed. One new assistant principal in 1992-93 commented: "I have never been around a more cohesive group of people. They're of one purpose and willing to take risks for kids." Another new assistant principal observed that staff are content and pulling together. "They embrace you: they speak in terms of we." Students also see a difference. One asked, "Have you noticed teachers are smiling this year?"

Southern's interactive strategy has paid off. Students' attitudes toward their teachers improved consistently over a three-year period (see Table 2). Appropriate student responses to 11 questions about teachers — e.g., "Most of my teachers really listen to what I have to say" and "Most of my teachers do not like me to ask a lot of questions during a lesson" — were in the high range, but were not the highest, compared to students' responses in other schools in 1990-91. However, in both 1991-92 and 1992-93 Southern's students' responses were the highest on seven out of 11 items. On nine items, their 1992-93 responses were better than in 1990-91, a definite pattern of improvement over time in relation to the other schools. These results are consistent with observed teacher behavior: connecting with students and their families has been a high priority for the staff.

Table 2

Southern Middle School Students' Reactions to Teachers Over Time
Measured on the *Quality of School Life Scale*

Scale Item	Percent of Students With Positive Responses		
	1990-91[b]	1991-92	1992-93
Want same teachers next year	36%	49%[c]	48%[c]
Do things teachers' way[a]	38	36[d]	40[c,e]
Teachers are always right[a]	54	55[d]	56[c]
Teachers really listen	65	71[c]	71[c]
Teachers favor certain students[a]	42	48[c,e]	38[d]
Teachers' behavior likeable	57	58	58[c]
Teachers don't like questions[a]	59	69[c]	60[d]
Teachers' ability	42	52[d,e]	49[d]
Like all/most teachers	56	62[c]	58[c]
Teachers on same wavelength	68	68[c]	64[d]
Approach teacher to talk	31	41[c,e]	42[c]

[a]"False" answers to these questions are considered positive.
[b]Southern's responses were not the highest on any item.
[c]Southern's responses were the highest on these items.
[d]Muirlands' students had the highest scores on these items.
[e]High score is shared by one other school on this item.

Dear Mr. Clemons

Thanks for all the money that you let Ms. Jewell have to take us to the Zoo. I realy had fun, I got to hold a real snake. The snake started in my arms and ended up on my shoulder. It started for my nech so the Zoo keeper took it.

I think you have done a nice job here, "So far So good" I've only been in trouble once and you all did a good job catching me. In a way I'm mad, but I happy for you.

Yours truly,

Shaun W.

The teams enjoy autonomy. Teachers feel they have a voice in everything that happens, have changed their teaching methods, feel more creative, and try to relate curricula to their students' lives.

These attitudes and behaviors reflect research and knowledge about adolescent development. The Middle Grades Assessment Program, for example, measures nine developmental needs of young adolescents, including social interaction with peers and adults, that is, opportunities for positive interactions with peers, parents, and other adults to gain a realistic view of caring relationships.[18] Teachers in Initiative schools, especially at Southern, received training to address these types of adolescent needs.

High quality student-teacher interaction is a measure for judging whether a school has created an environment that is responsive to adolescent needs.

— *Clark, Bickel, and Lacey,*
Transforming Education for Young Adolescents

Classroom Interactions

Staff development in several project schools also stressed student-teacher interactions that demonstrate high expectations in the classroom. According to Good (1987),[19] researchers have discovered that:

> Expectation effects can operate at the level of groups, classes, or entire schools . . . it is clear that teachers communicate expectations to entire classes and to groups of students . . . Too often, low groups continually get less exciting instruction, less emphasis on meaning and conceptualization, and more rote drilling and practice activities . . .
>
> Students placed in top groups [have] more educational advantages. For example, students in the highest groups [have] (a) more opportunities to demonstrate competence, (b) work and task environments conducive to learning more academic skills, and (c) greater opportunity to practice autonomous, self-directed modes of learning (pp. 38-39).

Good suggested several ways to improve the level of expectations teachers display in the classroom, including the following.

- Give students opportunities to apply knowledge.
- Increase opportunities for students to participate actively in lessons and use materials in meaningful ways, by reducing teacher-led discussions and routine seat-work.
- Ask students questions that require them to think, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate ideas.
- Be encouraging and reinforcing by noting group progress toward learning goals.

Classroom observations documented students' opportunities to participate, the proportion of students who actively participated, and whether instruction challenged and stimulated students. Classes were selected for observation based on a variety of circumstances, for example, classes in certain subject areas, or where cooperative learning was taking place, or at certain grade levels. (See Appendix D for a breakdown of observations by site, year, grade, and subject.)

Table 3 shows results of these observations over three school-years in four subjects and for the 289 observations overall, with the following general results.

Students' opportunities to participate actively in class increased. The opportunity was evident in only 65% of the 1990-91 classes observed; this had increased to 84% of 1992-93 classes observed, and the greatest increase (+29%) was in math classes.

The percentage of students actively participating in class also increased. The greatest increases were observed in language arts (+20%), science (+15%), and math (+11%) classes.

Students were increasingly challenged and stimulated in math and social studies classes. Findings in language arts and science classes were mixed.

> *Studies of effective teaching provide a rich source of data on the microlevel variables that contribute to school effectiveness . . . The consistent characteristics that have emerged include degree of curriculum articulation and organization; maximized learning time;* high expectations for student achievement; opportunity to respond; degree of classroom engagement; *and student participation in setting goals, making learning decisions, and engaging in cooperative learning.*
>
> —*Wang, Haertel, and Walberg,*
> "Educational Resilience in Inner Cities"

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Table 3

Levels of Participation and Feedback in Classroom Interactions, by Subject[a]

Behavior	Subject[b]/Percent of Observations in which Behavior was Recorded														
	Math			Language Arts			Science			Social Studies			Overall[c]		
	91	92	93	91	92	93	91	92	93	91	92	93	91	92	93
Students:	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Opportunity to Participate	59	74	88	76	76	90	70	58	83	60	85	77	65	72	84
Actively Participating	77	79	88	48	76	68	60	80	75	65	77	69	64	77	70
Challenged and Stimulated?	64	74	82	72	84	48	80	67	83	45	39	62	64	69	67
Teachers' Feedback:															
for correct responses	82	74	94	64	84	84	50	87	83	45	77	69	59	75	80
for incorrect responses	68	74	88	44	72	61	40	27	67	45	39	39	52	52	59

[a] Based on 289 structured classroom observations in all subjects in the 12 project schools in 1990-91 (103), 1991-92 (92), and 1992-93 (94).

[b] Includes 222 observations: math (58); language arts (81); science (37); and social studies (46).

[c] Includes all observations in all subjects (these four plus physical education, ESL, career education, foreign languages, etc.)

Classroom observations also revealed how teachers responded to students' contributions in class. Documenters recorded the incidence of teachers giving feedback (e.g., reinforcing, correcting, elaborating) for students' correct and incorrect responses. As indicated in Table 3, teachers' behaviors changed over time.

Teachers' feedback for correct responses increased substantially over time. In 1990-91, teachers gave positive feedback for correct answers in 59% of classes observed; by 1992-93, in 80% of classes observed. The greatest increase (33% over time) occurred in science classes.

Teachers' feedback for incorrect responses increased in math, language arts, and science. Overall, feedback improved from 52% to 59% of classes.

Clearly, as teachers in project schools were made aware of the need to provide immediate feedback to students, their classroom behaviors changed: in 80% of all classes observed in 1992-93, teachers were giving positive feedback to correct responses, and in close to 60% of classes teachers were providing appropriate feedback to students giving incorrect responses.

With the expectation that every child will be acknowledged for his or her contribution, any suggestion that some are more "deserving" than others is discouraged and the concept of community to which everyone can contribute is reinforced.

—Wheelock,
Crossing the Tracks

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Teacher Reflection

Have teachers changed their expectations over time? From interviews with teams of teachers at three points during the third and fourth project years, it was apparent they had changed their definitions of high expectations and observed changes in students' behaviors as a result.

Class discussions are held on a higher level and teachers try to make students think more by making them give the answer and discuss the thought process behind it.

— Teachers, West Baltimore Middle School, Spring 1993

Project teachers' evolving definitions of high expectations are illustrated in Table 4. Summaries of interviews with Baltimore and Louisville teachers, for example, cluster around three themes: (1) curricular content and complexity; (2) teacher behaviors; and (3) innovative methods. Baltimore teachers focused on curriculum and innovation in the first round of interviews. Teacher behaviors reported in the second and third years reflected more high-level expectations for student work. Likewise, Louisville teachers' descriptions indicate more high-level expectations in the spring, 1992 than in the prior fall. In 1993, Louisville teachers focused more on challenging curriculum and innovative methods.

Table 4

Teachers' Definitions of High Expectations and Activities Over Time[a]
Middle Grades Initiative

	Baltimore	Louisville
Fall 1991	▪ Curricular Programs: — high content reading and writing ▪ Innovative Methods — cooperative learning — interdisciplinary instruction	▪ Curricular Content: — algebra, interdisciplinary work, Socratic seminar, high-level literature ▪ Teacher Behaviors: — hold students responsible for homework — require students to redo work products — reject sloppy work
Spring 1992	▪ Teacher Behaviors: — expect more in writing — require student presentations — respond to students' questions — assess students regularly — challenge students to achieve goals	▪ Teacher Behaviors: — challenge students — set clear, consistent goals — accept only completed and high quality work products — maintain high content curriculum
Spring 1993	▪ Teacher Behaviors: — assign more difficult, complicated work — hold higher-level classroom discussions — set higher student work standards	▪ Challenging Curriculum: — Writing to Learn, transitional math ▪ Innovative Methods: — cooperative learning — more problem solving — moving away from tracking — use of work portfolios

[a]Summaries of interviews with teams of teachers in third and fourth project years.

Although teachers believe curriculum and methods are important, they also realize that their own behaviors set standards: assigning more difficult work; accepting only completed, high-quality products; holding higher-level classroom discussions; setting clear, consistent goals; requiring students to revise and improve their work; and being responsive to students' questions are all indicators of high expectations. Such behaviors go far beyond recognizing students who make the honor roll or achieve perfect attendance.

Effects on Students

Do teachers think their students are responsive to the challenges of high expectations?

> Students are talking more about assignments and projects. Students work hard at first because teachers require it, then their own learning goals develop. They ask a lot of "why" questions.
>
> — Louisville Teachers, 1991

> Students are willing to work. They can tell subs (substitute teachers) what to do and they can run classes on their own. They are excited and involved in projects they want to continue. They can relate knowledge from one class to another.
>
> — Baltimore Teachers, 1992

Teachers' judgments that students are developing their own goals, transferring knowledge, and becoming involved in projects indicated more thoughtful, critical engagement in schoolwork, a precursor to higher order thinking. The Clark Foundation wanted students to "have access to challenging courses, content, and materials." Documentation of the Initiative shows that students have been exposed to more high content subject matter, more opportunities for problem solving and critical thinking in class, and more complex instructional techniques which require them to think out loud.

An Excel Teacher Speaks:

I begin every school year by asking my students to brainstorm the qualities that they find in a "bad" teacher, and the qualities that they find in a "good" teacher. Every year the responses are exactly the same.

- They want to be accepted.
- They want to be heard.
- They want to be taken seriously.
- **They want a teacher who has high expectations for them.**
- They want a teacher who is kind and nice.
- They want a teacher who is willing to take the time to help them.
- They want a teacher who cares about them academically and personally.

— Amy Robertson, language arts teacher
Southern Middle School, 1993

Some teachers unknowingly victimize their students by stereotyping them, . . . and they end up paying more attention to rescuing than to demanding high performance. These teachers tend to tolerate inappropriate behaviors, blaming it on students' lack of upbringing.

— Beverly Bimes-Michalak,
Staff Developer, Writing-to-Learn

(As quoted in *Changing the Odds*, 1993)

Expecting The Future

It was clear from the beginning that Louisville took its partnership with Third Century, Inc. seriously. A local civic group of young professionals and business people, Third Century asked the school district in the summer, 1989 how its members could help students.

Louisville's Middle Grades Initiative coordinator, Howard Hardin, proposed a "High5 Leadership Program" to help teachers "experience and examine the changing nature of the community" in order to better prepare their students to be thoughtful and productive citizens. Teachers would have "real-life" experiences outside the classroom with leaders and entrepreneurs to make their instruction more relevant.

Third Century hosted a reception for teachers, attended by the Mayor and the president of the Chamber of Commerce, who underscored the partnership's importance as they shared their perspectives about the role of education in Louisville's future.

The next day teachers began community experiences by shadowing Third Century members to learn about the skills required in various occupations. The district reported teachers' increased awareness of job skills and expectations. "Just to be in the different environments was an 'eye opener' for most of the staff."

Partnership job shadowing expanded quickly to include students. When Third Century called for volunteers to participate, 48 of 50 members agreed to help. In the spring, 1990, dozens of eighth graders participated in job shadowing, (see Shadows story in box) and that summer plans were made for all eighth graders and their teachers in project schools to participate in 1990-91.

The following year, a coordinator was hired and a "Job Shadowing" Handbook prepared. Organizations such as Blue Cross/Blue Shield, the Kentucky Opera, the Louisville Water Company, and First National Bank participated. Every eighth grader in the three project schools — some 900 students — took part in at least one job shadowing experience.

Shadows for a cloudy day

You know what Peter Pan says about shadows. If you don't have a shadow, then you can't grow up.

On an overcast day last month, when shadows normally don't appear, dozens of UPSers saw their shadows. And each of these shadows wanted to know what it's like to grow up.

Twenty-five shadows, in the form of eighth-graders from area middle schools, visited the United Parcel Service Air operations at the Hurstbourne facility and at the Standiford Field. It was a joint project between the Louisville Third Century, Inc., and the Jefferson County Public Schools (Louisville), in which UPS provided these youths with a positive career experience.

The students shadowed UPSers during the business day and learned about the Air operation. Line Maintenance supervisor Mal Miller took an Iroquois Middle School student on a walk-around on a 727 and a daily check of a 757.

Mal doesn't have to convince the student that the airline industry is the place to be when she grows up. She already has her eyes on the Shawnee Aviation High School program.

On the other hand, a Southern Middle School student who learned about the importance of safety and accident reports from administrative employee Connie Clifton is planning a career in engineering.

Two Western Middle School students spent the day with flight instructor Ken Mayes who took the eighth-graders for a ride in an aircraft simulator.

Later that afternoon, the sun peeked through the clouds and the shadows disappeared, leaving UPSers looking forward to next year, when shadows reappear to find out what it's like to grow up.

— Airline BIG IDEA, 5/90

A Third Century Team meets monthly to review progress and plan the next month's student shadowing experiences. The head of Third Century's education committee states:

> *"One message that comes through on each job shadowing visit is that education is the key to career success. Not that all students are going — or should go — to college, but rather that all students understand the necessity of some type of training beyond high school." (Quote from* High5 Highlights, *June, 1993.)*

In Oakland also a group of civic-minded professionals was prepared to help out in the schools. Businesses and agencies which formed the Oakland Partnership in Education provided field trips and career fairs for children in the three project schools. At King Estates Junior High School, for example, two career fairs introduced students to some 16 occupations, such as law, computers, and podiatry.

All 12 schools provided beginning career awareness and opportunities to learn about postsecondary options for their students. Milwaukee's Kosciuszko Middle School enlarged and enriched its Career Linking program, a comprehensive introduction to career fields: students hear speakers, view videos, conduct research, do field visits, and shadow staff. Students are introduced to the world of work in sixth grade, learn about pre-vocational skills in the seventh, and participate in six-week sessions which include field trips and job shadowing in the eighth.

Other schools provided field trips to businesses and cultural institutions, held career fairs including local businesses and agency representatives, or invited guest speakers to classes, assemblies, or luncheons. Some schools also conducted trips to expose students to colleges and high schools.

Career Day At King Estates

The Community Relations Committee at King Estates Junior High School wanted to make sure students were prepared for Career Day sessions they would attend to hear special guests talk about careers. They distributed memoranda to the school's three dozen teachers asking them to introduce to their classes beforehand concepts about careers and related skills, and to give them behavioral guidelines for listening to and questioning the guest speakers. And well they might.

King Estates' 700 students, 90% of whom are African-American, were going to spend the morning of December 17 in four class-period sessions hearing descriptions of careers in aviation/engineering, employment and labor, chemistry, computers, law, insurance, the media, medicine, forestry, science research, public health, police and fire departments, respiratory therapy, printing, and podiatry. They were going to have an opportunity to interact with the speakers and to complete evaluation forms about them. Students were given handouts on "career discovery," "possible occupations," and "outlining the future" in preparation for Career Day.

This and the second Career Day held at King Estates the following April were a resounding success. Sponsored by IBM Corporation, which also provided a guest speaker/teacher luncheon when the sessions were over, the day was carefully planned by the school's librarian with assistance from the Oakland Partners in Education (OPIE), a special school-business partnership established along with the Middle Grades Initiative.

The event — with its detailed and comprehensive thrust — has been replicated twice each year at King Estates, and it is having an impact. Between 1991 and 1993, the percentage of King's students planning to enroll in a college prep high school program increased by 10 percent (from 31% to 41%); the percent whose career plans matched their high school and college plans increased to 54% in 1993 from 40% in 1991.

Career Linking At Kosciuszko

Career Linking, a pilot program at Kosciuszko Middle School in 1988-89, became a more comprehensive program with the Clark Foundation grant. Its goals are to enhance minority students' math and science career awareness through improved self-esteem, information about careers in these fields, and knowledge about career-related high school and postsecondary programs. It links students with the community and the world of work. Although designed for eighth graders, Career Linking is now coordinated for all three grade levels. The emphasis in each grade is as follows.

Sixth Grade. Students are introduced to the world of work through service jobs such as police officer and fire fighter. Activities include writing projects and career days.

Seventh Grade. Pre-vocational skills and community voluntarism are emphasized. Themes — which are integrated into the core courses — include cleaning the environment, assisting elementary school students, and reading to senior citizens. Students are shown how to become critical thinkers and problem solvers and how to identify opportunities to volunteer.

Eighth Grade. Various career fields (e.g., health care, engineering, robotics) are chosen for six-week study. Students watch job-related videos, go on field trips, hear guest speakers, and shadow professionals on-the-job. For example, a unit on health insurance was developed with the assistance of Blue Cross/Blue Shield; a health care unit was developed in collaboration with a local hospital. Both of these institutions assist in the six-week study activities and are the locus of student job shadowing.

Much of this activity addressed the Foundation's objective that students be given opportunities to understand postsecondary and career options so that they would enter high school understanding what curricular programs are necessary to achieve their aspirations. The Foundation believed that, unless students understood their options and were told that it was possible for them to have college and professional careers, they would not have high expectations of themselves. The Foundation was particularly concerned that students understand how important their high school program would be in determining their postsecondary and career options.

The *School and Career Planning Survey* which ERG administered to students each spring revealed steady progress in students' understanding of career requirements. Their grasp of high school requirements, however, was not as strong, and student responses to the survey generally did not improve each year.

ERG found that if career awareness activities were not incorporated into school programs or made part of particular courses, the most students might experience would be an annual career day or a few guest speakers. It became clear that schools had to offer experiences and information about high schools and careers *purposefully, regularly, and annually.*

On the other hand, students started to understand better that academic high school programs were more suited to college and careers in general than vocational/technical programs. In most of the schools over time, more students reported that they planned to enroll in college preparatory high school programs and fewer students planned to enroll in vocational/technical programs. Data from these survey items are displayed in Table 5: in 1993 eighth

Table 5

Percent of Middle Grades Initiative Eighth-Grade Students Indicating High School Plans[a]

	College Prep		Vocational/Technical	
	1991	1993	1991	1993
Baltimore				
Calverton	11%	15%	57%	42%
West Baltimore	51	44	37	29
Louisville				
Iroquois	11	19	31	22
Southern	9	20	37	14
Western	16	25	26	22
Milwaukee				
Kosciuszko	10	12	22	37
Parkman	30	18	31	25
Oakland				
Frick	22	33	23	23
King Estates	31	41	18	14
Roosevelt	15	30[b]	15	10[b]
San Diego				
Mann	24	31	13	16
Muirlands	NA	47	NA	8
NELS88[c]	29%		18%	

[a]Other choices include general and specialized programs.
[b]1992 data
[c]NELS88 was a survey of close to 25,000 eighth graders around the country.

graders in half the schools had higher percentages (i.e., over 29%) planning to enroll in college prep high school programs than the NELS88 national sample; in 1991, only three of 11 did. In eight schools, fewer students said they planned to enroll in a vocational/technical high school program in 1993 than in 1991.

Students listed career aspirations and postsecondary plans on the survey. Their career choices were divided into those that require a four-year college degree and those that do not, and were then matched with postsecondary plans. Over time, students' career and education plans became more aligned: data presented in Table 6 (column A) show that in six of 11 schools, more students in 1993 than in 1991 who had college-level career plans said they would enroll in a college prep program in high school. Also, in six of eleven schools, more eighth graders' plans for career and postsecondary education matched in 1993 than in 1991 (column B).

Finally, in nine of 11 schools, fewer students with college-level career plans in 1993 than in 1991 said they would enroll in vocational/technical high school programs (column C). These changes were dramatically evident in Calverton, Southern, Frick, and King Estates, where the percentages of students with unmatched plans — who had college-level career plans but said they were enrolling in vocational/technical high school programs — decreased by 22 to 28 points in each school.

Table 6

Percent of Middle Grades Initiative Eighth Graders
Whose College-Level Career Plans Match Their Education Plans

City/School	Plan College-Level Career: Education Plans Match — A: Plan to Enroll in HS College Prep		Education Plans Match — B: Plan to Attend College		Plans Do Not Match — C: Plan to Enroll in Voc Tech HS Program	
	1991	1993	1991	1993	1991	1993
Baltimore						
Calverton	17%	35%	50%	56%	67%	39%
West Baltimore	62	60	51	44	31	27
Louisville						
Iroquois	29	30	46	46	26	27
Southern	29	29	46	53	31	8
Western	38	38	39	50	26	16
Milwaukee						
Kosciuszko	23	19	43	49	26	37
Parkman	46	24	38	43	30	19
Oakland						
Frick	26	54	40	37	26	4
King Estates	30	54	40	54	30	2
Roosevelt	26	42[a]	49	31[a]	21	19[a]
San Diego						
Mann	38	62	53	39	13	10
Muirlands	NA	62	NA	43	NA	10

[a]1992 data

Overall, these results are promising. As students were made more aware of how their education would affect opportunities for careers and college, they planned increasingly to enroll in college prep high school programs and go to college. Also, exposure to the workplace and information about the levels of education required for certain jobs led more students to indicate that vocational/technical high school programs would not help them achieve their aspirations. Finally, the emphasis on college and careers helped many students become aware that going to college was a real possibility for them.

Linking High Expectations With High Content

When 26 Iroquois eighth graders arrived for their morning language arts class in March, 1992, the class began seriously — the group had been following a local murder case which involved middle and high school girls. All listened intently as one student read aloud the most recent news article about the case. The students' behavior during the ensuing discussion showed that they were accustomed to dealing with relevant and important issues in class, and that their teacher expected them to be able to do this.

She then shifted to explaining the scoring system that would be used to rate students' papers and essays in their writing portfolios, as part of the new state assessment program. Again, students were engaged and serious — perhaps apprehensive about a formal evaluation of their work. Clearly, this was not the first time they were hearing about the assessment.

Selected papers and essays were displayed on an overhead projector, and students volunteered to read them aloud. Groups of students practiced scoring these papers based on guidelines. They then reviewed papers from their own portfolios, analyzing and scoring their work.

The teacher posed numerous questions requiring higher order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. She acknowledged students' correct responses and frequently rephrased their comments or elaborated on them. When they answered incorrectly, she went to great lengths to ensure that students understood.

Later, the teacher said that without the staff development she had received, she probably would have given the essays scores of 2 or 3 (average scores on a scale of 1-5); however, she had learned that the state's standards were higher and that many of these papers would actually receive scores of only 1 or 2. Although she clearly had high standards for her students, the training convinced her to aim even higher. "I have to raise my expectations," she concluded.

Language arts teachers in all three Louisville Middle Grades Initiative schools are using student writing portfolios because the state requires them under its new Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA). However, as the three principals are quick to point out, they were well prepared for implementing KERA mandates because they were already working on high content issues with their project grants.

Writing in Language Arts

During three school years ERG conducted 81 observations of language arts classes categorized as advanced, intermediate, or basic as follows.

Advanced:	Complex skills and critical thinking required critiquing, reviewing, rewriting, analyzing
Intermediate:	Typical middle-level content required sequencing, outlining, discussing, creative writing skills
Basic:	Routine content used work-sheets and required lower-level skills such as copying, listening, observing, and describing

Observers were looking for the incidence of writing in these classrooms. Most project schools increased emphasis on writing. During classroom observations in 1990-91, only five of 25 language arts teachers required students to write; all five were in intermediate to advanced language arts classes. No writing was required in the ten basic classes observed.

By 1991-92, over half of the 25 language arts classes observed required writing. Five of ten basic lessons had students construct sentences using specified words, prepare letters on

computers, and create comic strips. Two of eight intermediate classes focused on writing preparation, and in six of seven advanced classes students were scoring writing samples, writing and rewriting, and preparing business letters.

During the final year of classroom observations, in the one advanced language arts class observed, students were working on second and third drafts of written pieces. Half of 14 intermediate classes observed focused on writing; students were composing poems, responding to open-ended questions, and writing in journals. Students in three basic classes were writing sentences with details or designated vocabulary words.

These increased writing activities reflect teachers' growing understanding not only of how writing fosters critical thinking skills but also of students' capacities to perform more complex, higher order tasks.

The most important manifestation of a school's expectations is the curriculum content taught at each grade level. There has to be agreement on specific, attainable, appropriately challenging curriculum goals . . . , with exemplars showing what students are expected to accomplish and enlightened assessments to hold them accountable.

— *Marshall,*
"Teachers and Schools — What Makes a Difference?"

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Higher-Level Mathematics

Teachers' expectations also increased in math classes. ERG observed over 50 math classes, documenting increases over three years *from 26% to 33% to 47% of classes involving higher (advanced) content.* Categories included both content and method.

Content

Traditional: Computation with whole numbers, fractions, decimals, percent, basic measurement, and elementary applications

Advanced: Introductory algebra, work with variables, equations, problem solving

Method

Traditional: Teacher presentation, question and answer, review of homework, individual student work

Innovative: Hands-on activities, cooperative learning, computer use

The schools' emphasis on high content played out in their increased offerings of algebra, computer-assisted instruction, and special programs like HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills).[20]

Before HOTS, teachers never thought about teaching higher order thinking skills.

— Teachers, Muirlands Middle School, Fall 1991

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Such programs often contain higher content and more innovative teaching techniques. Over half of math classes observed used innovative methods: 69% of classes with traditional content and 47% of higher content classes demonstrated innovative methods; only 17% of classes demonstrated both high content and innovative methods.

Math also has a more prescribed curriculum than language arts, making content changes more difficult than in other subjects. Consequently, math teachers were more likely to adopt new teaching methods (57%) than to use higher content in their lessons (35%) over the three years. Teacher interviews corroborated these observations. Teachers referred to cooperative learning and computer-assisted instruction — innovative teaching strategies — as high content activities. In fact, teachers undertook more imaginative and exploratory approaches in the hope that they would heighten students' interest and increase understanding.

Questioning and Thinking

Teachers were purposefully pursuing strategies to motivate students through more engaging and varied techniques. Increased use of questioning, which stimulates more student-teacher interactions and thinking out loud, is a mechanism for promoting higher order thinking. Over time, teachers asked more questions of fact, understanding, and evaluation. The incidence of analytic questioning varied, although it increased in language arts and social studies.

Criteria For Categorizing Teachers' Questions

Factual:	Remembering previously learned material (Knowledge). Questions may ask students to define, identify, recall, or recognize.
Understanding:	Grasping the meaning of materials (Comprehension). Questions may ask students to interpret, explain, or rephrase.
Analysis:	Breaking down material into parts so that its structure is understood, and putting parts together to form a new whole (Analysis/Synthesis). Questions may ask students to classify, distinguish, analyze, write, design, or produce.
Evaluation:	Judging the value of material for a given purpose (Evaluation). Questions may ask students to argue, validate, compare, or appraise.

From Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Cognitive Domain

As Table 7 shows, the most dramatic change was that teachers asked more factual questions. In 1990-91, this occurred in between 50% and 64% of observed classrooms; by 1992-93, the range was 77% to 100%. Although factual questioning represents the most basic kind, its sharp increase indicates a concerted effort to engage students in exchange about knowledge and as a result, to increase student-teacher interactions on task.

Questions of understanding also increased substantially from 41% in 1990-91 to 66% in 1992-93. Evaluative and analytic exchanges, requiring more complex and higher order thinking by both students and teachers, occurred less frequently and more variably.

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Table 7

Percentages of Classroom Observations Recording Different Types of Questioning in Middle Grades Initiative Schools, 1990 to 1993[a]

	Percent of Classroom Observations[b] Questioning Type and Year											
	Factual			Understanding			Evaluative			Analysis		
SUBJECT	90-91	91-92	92-93	90-91	91-92	92-93	90-91	91-92	92-93	90-91	91-92	92-93
Language Arts (N = 81)	52%	80%	94%	24%	76%	71%	8%	28%	19%	28%	56%	39%
Math (N = 58)	64	58	77	55	58	71	18	5	6	41	26	29
Science (N = 37)	50	73	100	40	67	75	20	27	33	50	40	50
Social Studies (N = 46)	60	77	85	35	69	62	15	39	23	35	69	54
All Subjects[c] (N = 289)	56	69	85	41	69	66	17	28	17	37	50	37

[a] Observations were conducted by seven ERC documenters; two persons were assigned to each of the five sites. Classes observed were selected in a random way, except where there was a need to observe a particular subject or grade, and at times where an innovative method was being used.

[b] Rows are not intended to total 100%.

[c] All Subjects includes 67 observations in foreign languages, ESL, career education, etc.

Finally, observations indicated variations by site. Louisville in particular showed a progressive pattern of questioning, reflecting its relatively advanced status. *Factual* questions were recorded in 88% of classes observed in 1990-91 and in 95% of classes in 1992-93: this type of questioning was already routine. Questions of *understanding* increased from 65% in 1990-91 to 90% in 1992-93, reflecting teachers' efforts to elicit critical thinking.

Other sites also increased these types of questioning substantially. The greatest increases in both types occurred in Milwaukee, by 30 points to 78% in factual questioning and by 42 points to 56% of questions in understanding. Baltimore and San Diego showed very large increases in factual questions: Baltimore, by 28 points to 93%, and San Diego by 53 points to 88% over the three-year period.

These strong changes represent positive outcomes of a strategy to nurture critical inquiry. What has come of it? One way ERG has measured changes in students' critical thinking is through administration of the *Cornell Critical Thinking Test:* **scores on this test have improved in four of five sites.**[21]

The *Cornell* measures skills of induction, deduction, assumption, and identification — a different set of skills than standardized achievement tests, which typically focus on measuring specific content. Scores for 1991, 1992, and 1993 are presented in Table 8 as the percentage of correct items on the total Cornell test. The aggregate Middle Grades Initiative student sample (750 to 950 randomly chosen students, each year per grade) showed improved scores in the following ways.

Table 8

Middle Grades Initiative Students' Scores on the *Cornell Critical Thinking Test*, 1991, 1992, 1993[a]

Percent Correct, Year and Grade

City/School	1991 6	1992 7	1993 8	1992 6	1993 7	1993 6
Baltimore						
Calverton	43.5%	43.0%	52.5%	44.1%	50.4%	39.8%
West Baltimore	51.5	51.7	51.7	46.8	48.7	45.1
Louisville						
Iroquois	51.3	48.3	52.2	49.3	52.2	51.7
Southern	47.9	53.8	53.7	47.6	47.7	48.6
Western	44.7	47.6	50.1	42.8	49.4	42.5
Milwaukee						
Kosciuszko	45.4	40.3	47.6	NA	45.6	40.4
Parkman	40.0	44.6	51.0	43.5	47.6	51.1
Oakland[b]						
Frick	38.6	NA	35.5	NA	41.8	41.8
King Estates	46.5	NA	47.7	NA	NA	NA
Roosevelt	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
San Diego						
Mann	53.5	54.2	51.7	45.6	59.7	45.5
Muirlands						
Latino[c]	NA	46.5	57.7	51.9	53.2	55.4
White	NA	66.2	66.8	62.8	65.3	62.4
Total Sample[d]	47.5	49.9	52.4	46.6	50.4	46.6

[a]Each spring, about 25% of a school's students were randomly selected to take the Cornell. These were not the same students each year. Sixth graders took the test in 1991, sixth and seventh graders in 1992, and sixth, seventh, and eighth graders in 1993.

[b]Oakland schools include grades seven to nine. For comparison purposes, seventh-graders' scores in 1991 and 1993 are listed in sixth-grade columns, and eighth and ninth-graders' scores in 1993 are listed in seventh and eighth grade columns, respectively. Oakland did not take the Cornell in 1992.

[c]The N's for Latinos are very small.

[d]Total sample includes between 750 and 950 students for each grade each year. The publisher's norm group consists of 600 seventh, eighth, and ninth graders.

- Sixth graders who took the test in the spring, 1991 (about 25% of enrolled students) had an average of 47.5% correct. In spring, 1992, seventh graders had an average score of 50% correct. And in spring, 1993, eighth graders scored 52.4% correct.

- Sixth graders who completed the test in 1992 scored 46.6% correct; the following year, seventh graders had 50.4% correct.

- Sixth graders overall who completed the Cornell in the spring, 1993 had about the same average score as sixth graders had in prior years, with two exceptions:

  — Parkman's sixth-graders' scores increased from 40% to 43.5% to 51.1% over the three years; and

  — Muirlands' Latino sixth-graders' scores improved from 52% to 55.4% correct between 1992 and 1993.

Two external points of comparison exist for these scores. One is the test publisher's norm group of 600 seventh, eighth, and ninth graders from Southern California who scored 58% correct on the test. The second is the group of high achieving, upper middle class white students at Muirlands Middle School, whose standardized achievement test scores are among the highest in California and who scored 65% correct overall on the Cornell in 1992 and 1993.[22] Overall, seventh- and eighth-graders' scores in 1993, 50.4% and 52.4% on average, came close to the 58% national norm.

ERG's documentation in project schools provided evidence that teachers are presenting material in a more challenging forum, incorporating more problem solving and higher order thinking. And improvements in the students' scores on the Cornell indicate that they are learning to think more critically.

Building Expectations

How do outcomes of the Middle Grades Initiative — student recognition, teacher behaviors, and high content — relate back to the original objectives? Following the objectives for the Initiative (listed in bold face) are summaries of outcomes found in many of the project schools, as described throughout this report.

- **SCHOOLS PROMOTE AND SUPPORT HIGH LEVELS OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

- **TEACHERS IDENTIFY, PRAISE, AND BUILD ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC STRENGTHS**

Student Recognition. Most of the project schools (generally, nine of 12 over the four-year period) provide awards or recognition for students who make the honor roll, improve in specific subjects, and/or achieve on tests or class exams.

Teacher Behaviors. Teachers increasingly accept only completed work, make students revise work, set goals, challenge students in class, engage in higher-level discussions, give cooperative assignments, and assess students' progress. They treat students as though they like and respect them.

High Content. Writing and higher-level math have become the expected rather than the exception; class discussion involves more questioning and focuses more on understanding and critical thinking.

- **ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS BELIEVE THAT *DISADVANTAGED* YOUTH CAN ACHIEVE AT HIGH LEVELS.**

- ***DISADVANTAGED* YOUTH ARE CONSISTENTLY ENCOURAGED AND SUPPORTED TO PERFORM AT HIGHER LEVELS THAN THEY THINK POSSIBLE**

Student Recognition. In many schools, incentives are implemented to motivate student engagement and learning. Awards and recognition are targeted not just to honor roll students, but to students who have shown academic progress.

Teacher Behaviors. Teachers treat students equitably: they encourage all students to participate in class; their expectations for high-quality, completed work apply to all students; they set similar standards and goals for everyone, not just high-achievers.

High Content. All students, not exclusively those in advanced classes, engage in writing and higher-level math activities. Students are grouped randomly to work on projects requiring research, problem solving, and critical thinking.

- ***DISADVANTAGED* YOUTH HAVE ACCESS TO CHALLENGING COURSES, CONTENT, AND MATERIALS**

Teacher Behaviors. Teachers learn about and engage in innovative instructional techniques which assist them in presenting challenging content and materials. Teachers work toward making all of their classes higher level by assigning projects, group work, and problem-solving tasks. Assignments involve print, media, and human resources rather than or in addition to textbooks and worksheets.

High Content. All students have opportunities to study literature, writing, and higher-level math. They are grouped heterogeneously for class work, so that traditional underachievers have opportunities to take advanced rather than remedial courses.

- **_DISADVANTAGED_ YOUTH HAVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACADEMIC INTERACTION WITH HIGH ACHIEVING STUDENTS**

Teacher Behaviors. Teachers use cooperative learning in their classes. Based on school policy, teacher teams assign students to teams heterogeneously, without regard to ability levels, past academic performance, race, or ethnicity.

High Content. Students receive opportunities and incentives to participate in higher-level courses, student leadership and enrichment activities, and extracurricular projects without regard to past academic performance, race, or ethnicity.

- **_DISADVANTAGED_ YOUTH ARE CONSISTENTLY PROVIDED WITH INFORMATION, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND SUPPORT THAT RESULT IN EXPLORATION OF CHALLENGING CURRICULAR, EXTRACURRICULAR, AND POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES.**

Student Recognition. Awards for high performance include museum and cultural trips and luncheons with artists, business people, and the community, in addition to T-shirts, folders, and coupons to fast food stores.

Teacher Behaviors. Teachers work to open doors of opportunity for students, introduce them to the wealth and potential of school library and computer resources, and broaden their horizons. They encourage them to explore, have confidence in themselves, and go to college.

High Content. Students participate in exploratory and discovery projects in science, math, and the humanities. Career education programs are systematic and comprehensive; students learn about a wide array of career options and the secondary and postsecondary coursework required to pursue them.

Far from being a mere laundry list of optimal circumstances for promoting high expectations, these activities represent real accomplishments in some or many of the 12 project schools. Several of the schools routinely conduct such activities, and the majority have planned, experimented with, implemented, and revised behaviors and programs designed to raise expectations and improve student performance.

How did the teachers know what to do?

First, They Planned.

Teachers in more successful project schools found ways to get together and plan strategies for promoting high expectations. In some cases, they were given opportunities through district- or school-established mechanisms. Louisville set up a Planning and Implementation Team comprised of principals and teachers from the three project schools; San Diego's Mann Middle School teachers planned during common time set aside for the interdisciplinary teams; Muirlands Junior High School conducted the Middle Grades Assessment Program needs inventory before planning middle school transition activities in the fall, 1989. Milwaukee's two project schools had Clark teams of teachers who met regularly to plan change. Baltimore's schools designated specific teachers as "key implementors" responsible for coordinating planning activities.

Second, They Participated In Professional Development.

For all 12 project schools, extensive staff development through in-service, training and workshop sessions, networking, and visiting other schools was key to learning about adolescent development and new instructional strategies, and to raising expectations. Many teachers, for example, participated in TESA (Teacher Expectations for Student Achievement) program training, which encourages supportive interactions and motivating teaching techniques with all students. Other schools held workshops early on in cooperative learning, Teaching/Learning Styles, Socratic Seminars, Teaming, and working with at-risk students. In all the schools, time was set aside for professional development on a regular basis and during the summers.

Third, They Took Advantage Of Extensive Opportunities For Technical Assistance From Foundation-Funded Organizations.

The Clark Foundation commissioned the Center for Early Adolescence (CEA) in North Carolina, developer of the Middle Grades Assessment Program, (MGAP), to provide technical assistance. CEA's staff provided training in administering MGAP, setting up and maintaining interdisciplinary teams, assertive discipline, and cooperative learning, among other adolescence-related topics. They helped project schools and districts to plan and implement a variety of activities and to address problems. At Muirlands and Parkman Middle Schools, for example, CEA liaisons were instrumental in helping staff focus on racial or ethnic tensions and the need to deal with them.

Other groups were available for technical assistance as well, particularly to provide in-service sessions on topics related to adolescent development and needs. Some went far beyond workshops to provide a steady stream of training, modelling, and feedback to teachers as they implemented new programs.

The two Baltimore schools, for example, had assistance from researchers at Johns Hopkins University who were piloting a cooperative learning approach to reading and writing, Student Team Reading and Student Team Writing, which incorporate anthologies of literature to strengthen comprehension and composition skills. Examples of other critical thinking programs whose developers provided training and technical assistance follow.

- ALGEBRA PROJECT's Transition Curriculum addresses the conceptual shift from arithmetic to algebraic thinking, using an inquiry-based teaching strategy that builds on children's concrete experiences. (Louisville, Oakland)
- CHILDREN'S EXPRESS, a youth-run news service, encourages reading and writing and stimulates young people's interest in the world around them. (Louisville, San Diego)
- HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills), a computer-assisted instructional program, develops thinking skills in Chapter I students, grades 3 to 7. (Louisville, Oakland, San Diego)
- SOCRATIC SEMINARS, a literature-based teaching technique, develops critical reading and thinking skills through analysis and discussion. (Louisville, San Diego)
- WRITING TO LEARN, a writing and staff development program, encourages students to view their writing as a tool for success in all subjects, and trains teachers to help students develop critical thinking skills. (Louisville, Milwaukee, San Diego)

Ongoing documentation of efforts to raise expectations for academic performance can lead to greater understanding of how effective they are, and whether or not they lead to an abiding culture of high expectations. It is clear from findings about the Middle Grades Initiative schools that such efforts are improving students' engagement in school and their critical thinking. Since Initiative schools teach among the poorest children in their cities — those generally considered to be the most difficult to educate — current outcomes point to the *potential* for improved schooling in these and other urban areas around the country. Consistent implementation of high expectations is one critical key to achieving that potential.

Insights For Practitioners

A documentation of the Indiana-based Middle Grades Improvement Program (1987-1990) found the following to be critical ingredients of middle school reform.

- The link between middle grades reform and capacity building among school professionals is vital.
- Schools need time and resources to plan for and implement school improvement: released time for staff to meet and plan; and funds for staff development.
- "People" resources — technical assistants — are critically important.

—Clark, Bickel, and Lacey, *Transforming Education for Young Adolescents*

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Footnotes

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[16] Wheelock, *Crossing the Tracks*, p.92.

[17] As quoted in P. Forsyth and M. Tallerico, (1993), *CITY SCHOOLS: Leading the Way*, Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

[18] Dorman, *MGAP*.

[19] Good, "Two Decades . . ."

[20] S. Pogrow, *Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)* — A general thinking skills program for educationally disadvantaged students in grades 3 to 7. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona, College of Education.

[21] For Oakland, insufficient data prevent analysis over time. However, some scores in Frick and King Estates did improve.

[22] This statistic includes 99 sixth and seventh graders in 1992 and 122 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders in 1993.

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Middle Grades Initiative:

Participating Schools, 1989-1993

Baltimore City Public Schools
200 East North Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21202

- Calverton Middle School
  1100 Whitmore Avenue, 21216

1988 Enrollment:	1,225	100% African-American
1993 Enrollment:	1,315	92% African-American
1988 Free-Lunch Eligible:	80%	
1993 Free-Lunch Eligible:	68%	

- West Baltimore Middle School
  201 North Bend Road, 21229

1988 Enrollment:	1,400	80% African-American 20% White
1993 Enrollment:	1,700	80% African-American 20% White
1988 Free-Lunch Eligible:	52%	
1993 Free-Lunch Eligible:	57%	

Jefferson County Public Schools
3332 Newburg Road
Louisville, KY 40232

- Iroquois Middle School
  5650 Southern Parkway, 40214

1988 Enrollment:	730	67% White 32% African-American
1993 Enrollment:	890	71% White 29% African-American
1988 Free-Lunch Eligible:	71%	
1993 Free-Lunch Eligible:	48%	

- Southern Middle School
  4530 Bellevue Avenue, 40215

1988 Enrollment:	740	61% White 39% African-American
1993 Enrollment:	900	57% White 43% African-American
1988 Free-Lunch Eligible:	68%	
1993 Free-Lunch Eligible:	64%	

- Western Middle School
  2201 West Main Street, 40212

1988 Enrollment:	860	62% White 38% African-American
1993 Enrollment:	850	63% White 37% African-American
1988 Free-Lunch Eligible:	95%	
1993 Free-Lunch Eligible:	72%	

Milwaukee Public Schools
5225 West Vliet Street
Milwaukee, WI 53201

- Kosciuszko Middle School
  971 West Windlake Avenue, 53204

1988 Enrollment:	730	51% Latino, 27% White 12% African-American 7% Asian
1993 Enrollment:	740	57% Latino, 20% White 17% African-American 3% Asian, 3% Native American
1988 Free-Lunch Eligible:	86%	
1993 Free-Lunch Eligible:	84%	

- Parkman Middle School
  3620 North 18th Street, 53206

1988 Enrollment:	390	99% African-American
1993 Enrollment:	520	98% African-American
1988 Free-Lunch Eligible:	78%	
1993 Free-Lunch Eligible:	94%	

Oakland Unified School District
1025 Second Avenue
Oakland, CA 94606

- Frick Junior High School
  2845 64th Avenue, 94605

1988 Enrollment:	680	92% African-American 5% Latino, 2% Asian
1993 Enrollment:	650	86% African-American 9% Latino, 4% Asian
1988 Free-Lunch Eligible:	N.A.	
1993 Free-Lunch Eligible:	62%	

- King Estates Junior High School
  8251 Fontaine Street, 94605

1988 Enrollment:	600	94% African-American
1993 Enrollment:	685	93% African-American
1988 Free-Lunch Eligible:	N.A.	
1993 Free-Lunch Eligible:	50%	

- Roosevelt Junior High School
  1926 19th Avenue, 94606

1988 Enrollment:	850	40% Asian, 29% Latino 29% African-American
1993 Enrollment:	1,000	50% Asian, 27% Latino 22% African-American
1988 Free-Lunch Eligible:	N.A.	
1993 Free-Lunch Eligible:	65%	

San Diego City Schools
4100 Normal Street
San Diego, CA 92103

- Horace Mann Middle School
  4345 54th Street, 92115

1988 Enrollment:	1,380	30% White, 27% Asian 23% African-American 20% Latino
1993 Enrollment:	1,860	18% White, 32% Asian 23% African-American 27% Latino
1988 Free-Lunch Eligible:	26%	
1993 Free-Lunch Eligible:	75%	

- Muirlands Middle School
  1056 Nautilus Street, LaJolla 92037

1988 Enrollment:	975	54% White, 35% Latino 10% African-American
1993 Enrollment:	830	60% White, 32% Latino 2% African-American
1988 Free-Lunch Eligible:	29%	
1993 Free-Lunch Eligible:	22%	

Middle Grades Initiative:

Key Documentation Data Points, 1989-1993

1989-90

Site Visits: 5 to 6 per site, total =	28 visits
Phone Interviews: 1 to 3 rounds per site, total =	28 interviews

1990-91

Site Visits: 5 per site, total =	25 visits
Phone Interviews: 2 to 3 rounds per site, total =	27 interviews

1991-92

Site Visits: 3 per site, total =	15 visits
Teacher Interviews: 2 rounds per site, total =	10 rounds
Phone Interviews: 1 to 2 rounds per site, total =	16 interviews

1992-93

Site Visits: 2 to 3 per site, total =	14 visits
Teacher Interviews: 1 round per site, total =	5 rounds
Phone Interviews: 1 to 2 rounds per site, total =	19 interviews

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Appendix D

Table A

Number of Middle Grades Initiative Classroom Observations by Site, Subject Area, and Year[a]

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	Totals
Baltimore				
Language Arts	11	9	6	26
Science	1	6	4	11
Social Studies	1	4	2	7
Math	2	7	4	13
Other	5	5	8	19
Louisville				
Language Arts	2	9	17	28
Science	0	4	4	8
Social Studies	5	3	6	14
Math	8	1	8	17
Other	2	5	6	13
Milwaukee				
Language Arts	6	4	3	13
Science	2	4	2	8
Social Studies	9	4	2	15
Math	4	6	0	10
Other	8	2	2	12

Oakland				
Language Arts	3	2	2	7
Science	4	0	2	6
Social Studies	1	0	1	2
Math	6	2	3	11
Other	3	0	3	6
San Diego				
Language Arts	3	1	3	7
Science	3	1	2	6
Social Studies	4	2	0	6
Math	2	3	2	7
Other	8	8	1	17
All Observations				
Language Arts	25	25	31	81
Math	22	19	17	58
Science	10	15	12	37
Social Studies	20	13	13	46
Others	26	20	21	67
Totals by Year	103	92	94	289

[a]Distribution by grade: sixth (74); seventh (90); eighth (76); and other (9th, mixed) (49).

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